

Friday, November 4, 2011

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Ben Ray Luján of New Mexico's Third District announced today that he has introduced legislation in the House of Representatives to help put veterans back to work. Luján's Heroes Hiring Heroes Act provides tax incentives to local businesses and veteran-owned businesses to hire unemployed veterans. It also creates a federal grant program to provide states with funding to sustain job training and job placement programs that assist veterans.

"America's most recent military veterans face a number of challenges as they re-assimilate into civilian life. As these brave former soldiers return home, many of them face difficult job prospects during this challenging economic time," Congressman Luján said. "This legislation honors our commitment to care for our veterans and show our gratitude for their service and sacrifice by encouraging businesses to hire those who served in our armed forces. It also recognizes the innovative efforts that states have taken to assist in employing veterans and provides them with vital funding to continue their critical work."

With the unemployment rate of post-9/11 veterans at 11.7 percent, the Heroes Hiring Heroes Act addresses veterans' employment in three ways:

- Authorizing grant funding to states to help place veterans in the job market by providing online resources, technical assistance and resume writing assistance, workshops and seminars for achieving success in the interview process, workforce training programs, or job fairs for veterans.
- Creating tax advantages for employers hiring veterans by allowing them to qualify for a tax credit of up to \$5,600 of the first \$12,000 of the veteran's wages.
- Permanently extending the work opportunity tax credit authorized in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that provides an additional 20 percent credit for veteran-owned businesses that hire unemployed veterans.

If enacted, the grant program established by the Heroes Hiring Heroes Act would assist states like New Mexico that have initiated programs to assist veterans in the job market. In 2008, the New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services initiated a pilot program that held job fairs around the state to connect veteran-owned and veteran-friendly businesses with out-of-work veterans. This program was the first of its kind in the country and was highly successful in matching veterans with employers who were ready to hire, but it could not be sustained due to a lack of state funding.

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